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## The Scenario of E-learning in India During COVID19

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### Abstract

E-learning was the most preferred mode of instruction during COVID19 pandemic. In March 2020, the Government of India closed all the educational institutions in India due to spread of COVID19 pandemic. The closure of educational institutions affected the schools, colleges and universities. To overcome this, the HEI's adopted various online learning methods to reach out to students. E-learning was the method which HEI's adopted for continuing the education during COVID19 pandemic. E-learning was one of the solutions which helped students to carry their teacher learning from the safety of their respective homes. It offered flexibility to students in terms of when and where they can learn. E-learning helped students and teachers in continuity of education during pandemic as it offered a quick and scalable solution for delivering educational content remotely which allowed students to continue their education without any interruption. The aim and objectives of the current study is to analyze the scenario of E-learning in India during COVID19 pandemic. It also highlights the importance of E-learning platforms because of which it was adopted during pandemic. Further, the study also highlights various challenges faced by teachers and students during pandemic.

**Key words:** E-learning, COVID19, Teaching Learning, Higher Education, India

### Introduction

India has seen rapid expansion in its higher education sector since 2001. There has been

a rise in the number of higher education institutions (HEI's) and the number of students enrolled in these institutions. The

All India Survey of Higher Education report 2020-21 reports reveals that the number of Universities and colleges in India is 1113 and 43796 respectively. The report further reveals that the enrollment in HEI's is 4,13,80,713 (Report of All India Survey of Higher Education, 2020-21). The increasing number of universities and enrolment in HEI's improves the financial stability which allows HEI's to invest in infrastructure, faculty and academic resources. The increasing enrolment on one side is a positive trend but it also causes strain on infrastructure which includes the classrooms, libraries and laboratories. With high enrolment, it many a times becomes tough to maintain the quality in education because the HEI's struggle to maintain rigorous academic standards. E-learning is an approach which can address the issue of quality in education and increase the motivation of students (Majid & Vijaya Lakshmi, 2022). It allows students to access resources and educational material at their own convenience. E-learning was the most preferred mode of instruction during COVID19 pandemic. In March 2020, the Government of India closed all the educational institutions in India due to spread of COVID19 pandemic. The closure

of educational institutions affected the schools, colleges and universities. To overcome this, the HEI's adopted various online learning methods to reach out to students. E-learning was the one method which HEI's adopted for continuing the education during COVID19 pandemic. The National Education Policy 2020 also recommends that the educational institutions should be ready to adopt alternative modes of quality education when in person teaching learning is not possible. The policy recognizes the importance of technology and acknowledges its potential risks and dangers.

### **E-learning**

E-learning is an innovative open learning modality which is used to deliver education and is introduced in order to enhance learning opportunities and facilitate the students access and success in education (Coopasami et al., 2017). It is an important technology of modern era where it helps in creating an interactive learning environment based on computers and internet (Majid & Vijaya Lakshmi, 2023). It is defined as the usage of electronic media (Paiva, et al., 2016; Agarwal & Pandey, 2013), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Educational

Technology (ET) in education (Contreras & Hilles, 2015; Al-araibi, et al., 2019). E-learning has expanded to include the use of mobile based and web-based tools for learning to take place at anytime and at any place (Adams et al., 2021). With E-learning, the content is delivered to students through digital resources like computers, tablets, smartphones, and the internet. It provides flexibility and convenience to learners as it helps them to access educational content from anywhere in the world. The E-learning platforms are often regarded as interactive as they incorporate various interactive elements like simulations, quizzes and discussion which engages learners and enhances their experience of learning. Other than interactive elements, E-learning platforms use multimedia elements like audio, video, animations etc. The learning in E-learning is designed to be self-paced which allows the learners to progress in their study at their own pace. The E-learning platforms also include various collaborative features and enable the learners to interact with their teachers and peers.

### **E-learning and COVID19 in India**

During the COVID19 period in India, the educational institutions were closed for in person teaching and online teaching learning

was the only solution for continuing teaching learning. E-learning was one of the most preferred teaching learning method adopted during COVID19. There were various factors which led to its prominence during pandemic. The main objective of Government of India was to stop spread of COVID19 by following social distancing measures. E-learning was one of the solutions which helped students to carry their teacher learning from the safety of their respective homes. E-learning platforms offered flexibility to students in terms of when and where they can learn. It also increased accessibility among students by enabling them to access course material and lectures. E-learning helped students and teachers in continuity of education during pandemic. It offered a quick and scalable solution for delivering educational content remotely which allowed students to continue their education without any interruption. The safety of teachers and students was the top most priority during pandemic and E-learning helped the teachers and students by eliminating the need for physical presence and ensuring a safe learning environment. There are various educational institutions who have already invested in technology and for them adopting E-learning was very

easy. Their investment made it feasible for students and teachers to transition to E-learning. The E-learning platforms offered collaboration to students and teachers so that they can collaborate with each other. It helped them to share best practices in dealing with the challenges posed by the pandemic. E-learning also offered students and teachers various digital tools and resources like video conferencing, online collaboration platforms, and interactive multimedia content which made it easy to replicate traditional classroom teaching learning. One of the benefits of E-learning is its scalability which makes it possible to accommodate more and more students making it feasible for educational institutions facing the challenge of delivering content to a dispersed and potentially large audience.

E-learning played a very crucial role during the pandemic but there were various challenges associated with its adoption. There challenges are:

- **Lack of access to Technology:** During COVID19 pandemic, one of the challenges in India was students' lack of access to technology and its devices like laptops, tablets, smartphone and a reliable internet connection. Haase et al.,

(2021) in their study revealed that around 53 respondents stopped using technology during pandemic and one of the reasons was the lack of access to technology. Gayle et al., (2021) also reported lack of access to good quality internet and it was one of the challenges during pandemic. The study further reported that around 22% of households were having lack of access to broadband internet services. Onyema et al., (2020) also reported that after the closure of educational institutions, there was lack of access to technology or good internet connectivity for learning. Francom et al., (2021) also reported lack of access to internet and computer among students during pandemic.

- **Lack of knowledge related to Digital tools:** During pandemic, there were students and teachers who were not familiar with using technology and its related tools. Their knowledge of E-learning tools affected the learning curve which overall affected the effectiveness of E-learning. Hassan et al., (2020) reported that in India, teachers were not familiar with the online teaching learning platforms which posed a challenging solution. Ahadi et al., (2022)

reported that teachers need to learn new technological tools they have never used before and use them in teaching learning so that an attitude of using these tools is aroused among them.

- **Engagement and Motivation:** During pandemic, maintaining students' engagement and motivation in E-learning was a challenging task. The absence of in person teaching learning impacted the overall teaching experience of students. The instructors continued to find ways to keep students engaged and motivated for E-learning during the pandemic. Khalif et al., (2021) reported that there were various factors which influenced the student's engagement in online learning, and these were cultural factors, infrastructure factors, digital inequality and threat to digital privacy.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** The assessment and evaluation also posed a challenge during pandemic as traditional mode of assessment may not seamlessly fit to online assessments. The faculty members used various online tools to conduct the assessment of the student's progress. Montenegro-Rueda et al., (2021) reported that it was lack of training of faculty members with which

they faced challenges in carrying out assessments. On the students' side, it was students dishonesty and misconduct during assessments.

- **Lack of ICT Infrastructure:** The lack of ICT infrastructure also posed a significant challenge during pandemic. It was seen that educational institutions in remote and economically disadvantaged areas lacked the necessary ICT infrastructure for digital learning. The absence of proper ICT infrastructure often correlated with the low level of digital literacy among students and teachers. Al-Ansi et al., (2021) reported that lack of ICT infrastructure was a barrier in the learning process. Al-Ansi (2023) reported that lack of proper ICT infrastructure affects the academic and practical activities in universities. Awuor & Kaburu (2014) reported that the availability of ICT Infrastructure will facilitate E-learning effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

The current study shed light on landscape of E-learning in India during COVID19 pandemic. The shift to online and E-learning after the arrival of COVID19 in India brought both opportunities and challenges. E-learning emerged as a viable tool which

helped in continuity of education. The digital divide became more apparent where students and teachers were having disparity in access to technology and its tools hindering the learning experience of many students. The education landscape continues to evolve in India and the lessons learned should guide future policy formations and educational practices.

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